

The strategic location of Monash ICP delivers a key cultural asset to Melbourne's burgeoning South East Corridor and anchors a network of cultural assets to leverage cultural tourism in the region

Executive Summary

This Business Case highlights the strategic significance and pressing need for enhanced cultural infrastructure for Melbourne's rapidly growing South East Region.

The investment proposed in this Business Case builds on the original Masterplan for the site, to realise an integrated cultural precinct for the community and wider region. Conceived by celebrated modernist architect, Harry Seidler, the first stage and Seidler's only purpose built gallery building was realised some 30 years ago, and is home to the Monash Gallery of Art (MGA), which is co located with Wheelers Hill Library (WHL) in a unique landscape and sculpture garden.

- MGA is a national treasure yet to be fully discovered. It champions Australian photography and photographers through its exhibition program and prestigious annual acquisition prize, and is the custodian of one of the most significant collections of Australian photography in the country built over its 40 year history
- WHL, one of 6 libraries servicing the local community, has strong community reach and houses a unique collection of photography reference books in a dedicated reading room.

The preservation of the significant MGA collection is threatened. Limited gallery and program space and collection store, which has remained static in size for 30 years despite a growing collection of great importance, challenge access and the delivery of key curriculum-based education programs. The aging building requires redevelopment to meet the industry standards and functions required of public art galleries and collecting institutions.

MGA requires dynamic, programmable exhibition spaces consistent with multi-media creative practice, and controlled collection storage and curatorial spaces to protect and preserve its significant and growing collection.

The Business case highlights key problems which must be addressed to protect and preserve this significant collection for the future and provide access to gallery and other cultural facilities for the city and South East region.

- Inability to meet changing expectations and increased demand for community, cultural and education programming inhibits audience growth and diversification
- Failure to leverage and exhibit our world class photographic collection undermines its status as a cultural destination and learning and creative centre
- Inadequate capacity and dysfunctional configuration of gallery, library and café reduces quality of visitor experience and utilisation of services and facilities
- Failure to preserve and develop a unique, nationally significant collection seriously threatens its condition, integrity and long-term accessibility.

Contemporary libraries contribute to the cultural fabric of their communities. They are cultural touch-stones and creative incubators:

Library spaces are also seen as creative spaces, associated with curiosity, wonder and discovery . . . [they] nurture creativity, learning and play; they provide access to knowledge, ideas, connection and discussion¹

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Libraries are being reinvented. Responding to community need their role in supporting social and economic outcomes for the community is increasingly evident and are becoming a social gathering space after home and the workplace, the 'Community Living Room'.

WHL lacks the flexibility to respond to the evolving and rapidly growing community. In addition to a range of building compliance and access issues, the lack of flexibility in program areas and poor access and connectivity highlight the need to upgrade WHL to meet industry standards and support the delivery of the Monash Public Library Service's vision for the community.

An unique opportunity

The reimagining of galleries and libraries has created new opportunities for programming and engagement, and the potential to integrate shared cultural spaces, and inter-disciplinary working, in new cultural developments. The collocated assets present a unique opportunity to fulfil a gap in cultural infrastructure in the South East region and deliver an important community asset to the City and region.

The Business Case sets out a vision for an integrated cultural precinct which will be transformational. Leveraging the significance of Monash Gallery of Art as a national cultural destination and the knowledge resources of the Wheelers Hill Library, it presents a recommended option which addresses a gap in cultural infrastructure in Melbourne's rapidly growing South East corridor, and delivers a unique integrated cultural and learning destination that seamlessly connects the visual and the literary arts to drive cultural tourism, job creation and strengthen the cultural capital of the region.

Cultural and Policy Contexts

Melbourne is home to some of the nation's most visited cultural institutions, and cultivates a vibrant, diverse small to medium enterprise cultural sector. Government policies expressed in *Creative State*, *the Victorian Infrastructure Plan* and the *Visitor Economy Strategy* recognise that to maintain and grow Victoria's competitive advantage, the State must balance infrastructure, events and programming.

While the Melbourne inner urban region has access to significant gallery collections, cultural mapping highlights [a significant shortfall in cultural infrastructure in Melbourne's South East region](#) - an area of significant population growth. Lack of access to cultural infrastructure is reflected in arts attendance and participation levels which are lower than the state across all genres.

Melbourne's cultural offer is central to its status as a tourist destination and supports local jobs and investment while exporting Victoria's reputation interstate and overseas. Culture is a key index in rating Melbourne as the World's Most Liveable City for an unprecedented seventh-year running in 2017 by Economist Intelligence Unit's Liveability Index. It continues to rank in the top three cities globally.

Culture is a key component of what makes Melbourne a desirable city to live and to visit - a cornerstone of our liveability. It is fuelled by a creative, culturally diverse community. It is widely accepted that positive recognition and expression of diversity through creative activities is important in creating a cohesive community. Collecting institutions such as galleries and libraries play a vital role in protecting and celebrating cultural heritage, sharing resources and fostering safe and inclusive community spaces. The City of Monash is a linguistically and culturally diverse city, with residents are from 106 countries, speaking 84 languages and practising 40 different faiths.

Based on the headline results of the economic assessment, there is a strong economic case for the development of MAPH. Both in person users and online users benefit from the delivery of the project

Regional Context

The City of Monash, at the heart of Melbourne's South East, is identified as the first in a list of places of state significance that will be the focus for investment and growth. Population projections for the region estimate 1.34 million residents will be located in areas adjacent to the City. The City is working collaboratively with seven Councils to prepare a South East of Melbourne City Deal which will deliver major infrastructure projects, services changes, policy and regulatory reforms to best support the region's need. These Councils recognise and support the strategic benefit of an integrated cultural precinct which aims to connect the visual and the literary arts to drive cultural tourism, job creation and economic growth. Investment in cultural infrastructure aligns with a number of priority objectives for the South East region:

- Delivering jobs and investment
- Connecting the education and skills sector to industry
- Achieving a more connected community
- Collaborating to attract infrastructure that increases liveability.

Options Considered to address the Problem

Co-located in a landscaped sculpture garden, MGA and WHL are key cultural assets serving the City of Monash and South East region. Comprehensive industry and community consultation highlight the value of these treasured community assets and informed the options considered to address operational and infrastructure issues threatening future access.

This Business Case analyses the problems presented by the current condition and constraints of MGA and WHL, identifying five options to address these. Options were evaluated by considering impact, deliverability, and overall value for money. Of the five options considered, three were shortlisted and assessed in detail:

- Option 2 – Program development, Branding and minor refurbishment
- Option 3 – Integrated cultural precinct as an art, cultural and learning destination
- Option 4 – Centre of excellence for photography and fine arts


Design and cost implications were assessed and weighted to their relative benefits to determine a recommended option to further resolve for this Business Case.

The recommended solution Option 3 – Integrated cultural precinct as an art, cultural and learning destination – provides a response which is visionary, and practical. It harnesses the existing site, but takes it to an entirely new level of operation, and creates a distinctive cultural and community destination for Monash and the South East.

Benefits delivered

Investment in an integrated cultural precinct delivers significant, sustained and significant benefit to the City of Monash, the region and the state. Investment will:

- Enrich the liveability and cultural life of the Monash and south east regional communities



Community expectations of galleries and libraries have diversified, with implications for design, service offer, engagement – and economic importance

- Establish Monash as a cultural destination and leader
- Deliver more efficient and sustainable cultural operations and services
- Ensure a national cultural asset is preserved and accessible now and in the future.

The case for investment is compelling. The redevelopment will deliver positive results in economic efficiency and regional economic impacts. Economic Analysis indicates that **the project benefits users more than the initial and ongoing investment at a ratio of almost 2 to 1.** It delivers strong and sustained growth in annual visits and will deliver strong positive employment impacts to the local community.

The redevelopment aligns closely with and supports local, State and Federal policy priorities and builds upon MGA's and WHL's well-established track-record of community engagement.

The strategic context and significance of the Monash Integrated Cultural Precinct is framed by the steady population growth in the City of Monash and surrounding LGAs, and Melbourne's broader strategy for growth, and for development of self-sufficient communities – 20-minute neighbourhoods.

The Museum of Australian Photography (MAPh) - an integrated cultural precinct - will create a cultural centre that drives cultural tourism through connecting key assets in the region and supporting the growth and vibrancy of a diverse, connected and inclusive community. Its vision:

“To leverage the significance of MGA, creating a cultural and learning destination that drives cultural tourism and strengthens the cultural capital of Monash through the development of an Integrated Cultural Precinct”.

The development of an integrated cultural precinct creates a central corridor that links to a network of arts and cultural organisations, from the CBD to the south eastern regions – embedding a suburban creative belt into the fabric of the State. It will position the City of Monash as a national and international leader in arts and culture and aligns with key priorities for the City and State.

The reimaging of the key cultural assets presents a major opportunity for south-east Melbourne and the State to capitalise on the opportunity to create a destination that drives cultural tourism, promotes job creation, and embeds it into a network of cultural hubs throughout Victoria.

Creating an arts and cultural home for the City of Monash and wider community, the vision will be realised through an enhanced library and expanded gallery which recognises the unique nature of MGA's collection. MAPh leverages the significance of MGA, its collection and exhibition programming with a new approach, integrating the visual and literary arts with targeted programs that foster creativity and critical thinking. It

MAPh will become an educational and programming centre, providing opportunities for life-long-learning including a dedicated children's Gallery-Library, targeted schools and tertiary programs and public engagement initiatives across the site that seamlessly combines the visual and literary worlds. The MAPh will act as a resource, particularly for secondary and tertiary students across the region.

The recommended Option 3 – Integrated cultural precinct as an art, cultural and learning destination

The redevelopment preserves and provides access to the nationally significant Australian Photography Collection, established over 40 years, for future generations **and leverages its colocation with Wheelers Hill Library and sculpture garden, to deliver an integrated cultural precinct.**

The Concept Design sets out the design and functional areas and relationships to realise this vision. Retaining the existing Harry Seidler building, strategic planning retains access to the gallery and library collections through a staged construction.

Providing shared program spaces and direct links-the costed concept design almost doubles the building area with an increase in areas of nearly 3,000m². It directly responds to the issues and benefits - setting out areas and requirements to meet industry best practise and support continued growth of the gallery collection. It ensures commercial and programming spaces are optimised, to support sustainable operations and provide enhanced opportunities to secure grants and philanthropic support.

The identification and analysis of options and benefits is supported by a Benefit Management Plan with weighted performance indicators to measure the delivery of benefits. A Response Options Analysis Report supports the evaluation of options and the recommended option and interventions addressed.

The comprehensive Business case scopes the problem, benefits and how these will be achieved. It delivers a costed concept design which achieves the vision for an integrated cultural precinct and is supported by economic analysis and operating forecasts. The construction program and project governance sets out a clear framework for project delivery.

It is supported by rebranding including the development of sub brands to clearly define the precinct. Rebranding is realised through a brand strategy, and visitation growth, through a Marketing Plan which supports the Business Case. Supporting access and engagement, the Business case is supported with a digital engagement strategy.

Project funding will be supported through an Advocacy Campaign and Engagement Strategy that support the Business Case.

The development plans address a range of constraints and problems associated with the two valued but ageing buildings. Resolving these problems will enhance programming capabilities and community engagement, improve operational efficiency, and build greater sustainability for the future.

Reshaping the Gallery and Library into an Integrated Cultural Precinct will also result in **the creation of a nationally distinctive and regionally vital cultural asset.**

The redevelopment preserves and provides access to the nationally significant Australian Photography Collection, established over 40 years, for future generations **and leverages its colocation with Wheelers Hill Library and sculpture garden, to deliver an integrated cultural precinct.**



APPENDIX -

CONCEPT PLANS,
PREFERRED OPTION



IMAGE 22 | AERIAL VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) as an arts, cultural and learning destination

Option 3 focuses on the creation of an Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) through a redevelopment of the site as an arts, cultural and lifelong learning destination in the heart of the City of Monash. This option provides a fully functional new centre for the library and gallery, while option 4 relocates the library offsite and option 2 utilizes the existing building.

The new building is purpose designed for exhibitions, cultural activities, life-long learning, public and private functions, to provide Melbourne and Victoria, with opportunities for engagement with art and culture, particularly in photography for which the MGA has a national and arguably international reputation.

The new MGA WHL will continue to house library services for the City of Monash and remain a focus for the cultural life of the city.

For any visitor, the arrival sequence is now clear and engaging.

From the southern carpark area, the visitor will be able to easily access all parts of the building, on a 24 hour basis or in specific opening hours. All visitors enter via Gallery Drive, off Jells Road, and have the choice of parking in the southern carpark or proceeding north through a wooded drive, where they can park on the roof-top carpark. At times, this carpark will also function as an event space for markets and special occasions.

The MGA's original front door will be re-established through the refurbishment of the Seidler building and its original foyer space.

Immediately in front of this entry, an expanded turning circle will be designed for buses and access to school and tour groups. A 5 min parking is also proposed, as a drop off point and for book returns.

The Ferntree Gully Road entry will now be used as a single services loading point, for deliveries to exhibition, event, library, hospitality and administration areas.

Expanded storage and back-of-house spaces adjacent to the loading bay will enhance functionality with easy connection to all levels via a goods lift. Access stairs, grand staircase and public lifts are located nearby to create a node of connectivity and function throughout all levels in the building at this pivotal point.

Pedestrian access to the site will be improved through an expanded southern entry into a long transition space at ground level, housing a reading room and community lounge.

This glazed galleria space is programmable, for retail, events, browsing and exploring. The link connects to a new two-story wing to the east, in place of the existing WHL library wing. Also located on this level (ground floor) is an expanded library space and shared staff facilities, boardroom and meeting spaces.

The new façade along Ferntree Gully Road will incorporate interactive signage to provide a new street presence and identity for the centre.

These programmable markers will highlight changing exhibitions and the MGA's extensive collection, functioning as a new sign for the MGA WHL.

The Seidler building will be reutilized for children's library, temporary exhibitions, educational events, and after-hours events, ideal as a stand-alone facility and an education space.

Northeast of the pavilion a new exterior courtyard will focus around existing heritage vegetation and provide sheltered space between the existing building and a new two storey northern wing, housing expanded MGA gallery spaces and shared staff and loading facilities for the centre. This courtyard will be an outdoor sculpture gallery, children's play space and preserve the historic pine trees iconic to the site

On the lower level (lower ground), one will access new MGA gallery spaces and a screen gallery/ theatre/flexible event space.

A larger café will be provided with an exterior dining area overlooking the lake. Adjacent to the café, the theatre will cater for lectures and other events. The café kitchen can service the café and events in the gallery spaces. The goods lift can also provide vertical connection between the café and the events spaces on the rooftop level.

Landscaping interventions will guide the visitor through the surrounding landscape.

The landscaping will explore subtle interventions to blend planted areas and create a more holistic and unified character throughout the site by enhancing the remnant indigenous vegetation while preserving the majority of the pine trees.

The sculpture park will be enhanced through the utilization of materiality, wayfinding, planting and orientation to achieve more prominence and relevance to the MoAP.

New services will be provided throughout the new building to improve sustainability and educate the public on passive and active building systems.

Conclusion

The goal of the design is to transform the precinct into a vital and welcoming new venue for major events and exhibitions focusing on the arts, specifically photography, while also providing the community at large with a cultural facility that will function as a destination for every day, occasional or special events use. The potential to combine cultural activities with life-long learning is enhanced by the generous and flexible exhibition rooms, community lounges and hospitality/event spaces.

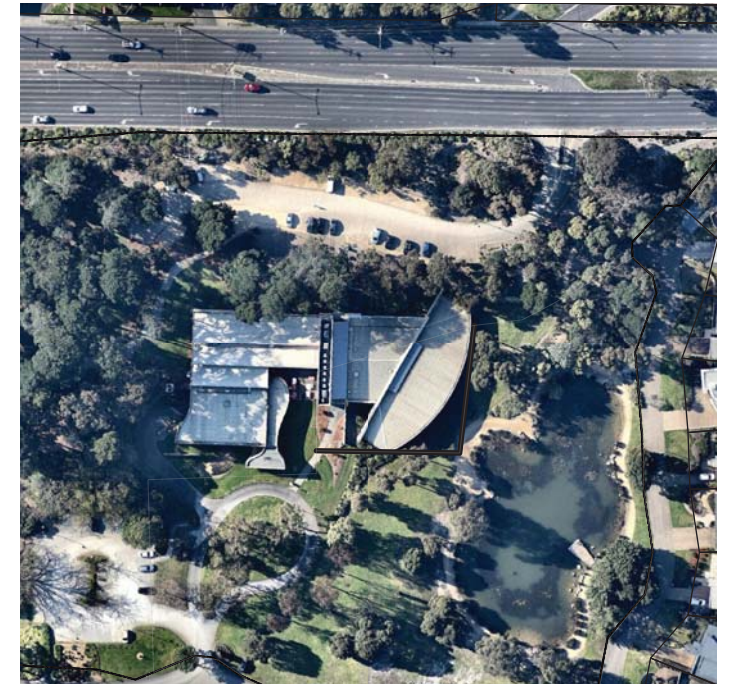


IMAGE 1 | EXISTING AERIAL

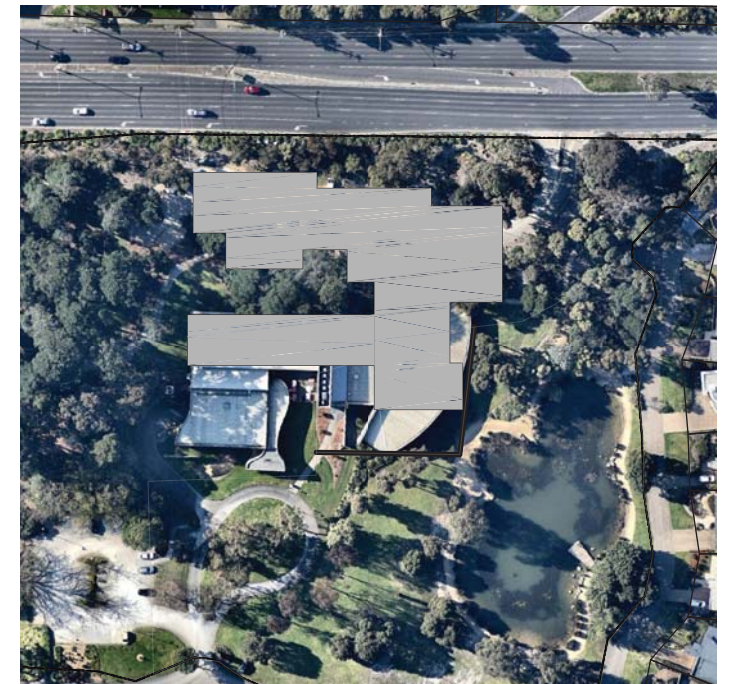


IMAGE 2 | PROPOSED BUILDING FOOTPRINT



Option 3: Overview

This option focuses on the creation of an Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) through the redevelopment of the site as an arts, cultural and life long learning destination in the heart of the City of Monash.

Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) as an arts, cultural and learning destination

The new building will be purpose designed for exhibitions, public and private functions, cultural activities and life-long learning, to provide Melbourne and Victoria, with new opportunities for engagement around arts and culture particularly in the field of photography and the arts.

The arrival sequence will be clear and engaging, guided by interactive signage at key entry points to provide a new street presence and identity for the centre. Markers will be programmed to highlight changing exhibitions and the MGA's extensive collection. Site access will be improved through a proposed connection between the Ferntree Gully and Jells Road entrances, with a new carpark to link the North and South lots. All carparking will be reworked to expand overall capacity and to enable a single loading point for all services of the building, including exhibition, event, learning/lounges, hospitality and administration areas.

Improved landscaping interventions will guide the visitor from the carpark to a generous front door, creating an inviting arrival sequence. The existing WHL building and the link between the library and MGA will be demolished and replaced with a new building below grade. The Seidler building will be returned to its original form and repurposed for programmable space, temporary exhibitions, educational events and after hours events and activities. A turning circle for bus and truck deliveries will be designed for the South side of the building to facilitate the arrival of school and tour groups, which will enter through the original front door and foyer to the Seidler building.

The main entry to the new building will be on the North side, bringing visitors into an expanded lower level housing galleries, collection and storage spaces. A larger cafe will be provided with new exterior dining, creating a connection to the lake. The lower level will also be programmed with flexible public spaces shared by all functions, which can spill into the exterior, connecting the inside with the surrounding landscape.

Lounge, reading, study spaces and the collection, along with a new theatre and flexible meeting/event spaces are proposed for the upper level that will connect to the Seidler building through a new event plaza. A canopy will enable all weather protection of the plaza.

The new building will utilize the double storey height differential between exhibition spaces and the rest of the programmed spaces as a mezzanine level for shared office and BOH uses and new plant areas. Storage and back-of-house spaces will have a direct connection to an efficient loading bay.

Through subtle interventions, the landscaping will blend planted areas and create a holistic and unified character throughout the site by enhancing indigenous vegetation while preserving the majority of the historic pine trees. The sculpture park will be enhanced through the utilization of materiality, wayfinding, planting and orientation to achieve more prominence.

Exterior gathering zones will facilitate educational opportunities and shared activities. A new lakeside boardwalk will provide recreation and quiet time for visitors and families. Pedestrian paths will be extended to areas previously underutilized.

New services will be allocated throughout the new building to improve sustainability and educate the public in regards to passive and active building systems.

Conclusion

This option transforms the precinct into a vital and welcoming new venue for major events and exhibitions focusing on the arts, servicing the community with a cultural facility that is a destination for every day, occasional or special events. This option provides the potential to combine cultural activities with life-long learning, with generous and flexible exhibition rooms, community lounges and hospitality/event spaces.

Site arrangement diagram



Legend

- Seidler building
- Reimagined/new building
- ← Main entry points
- Sculptures
- Reimagined pedestrian network
- Outdoor exhibition walls
- Key landscaped spaces
- Existing trees
- Enhanced lake edge
- Reworked parking, loading and drop-off

IMAGE 9 | OPTION 3 3D VIEW LOOKING SOUTH - WEST

Option 3: Design approach

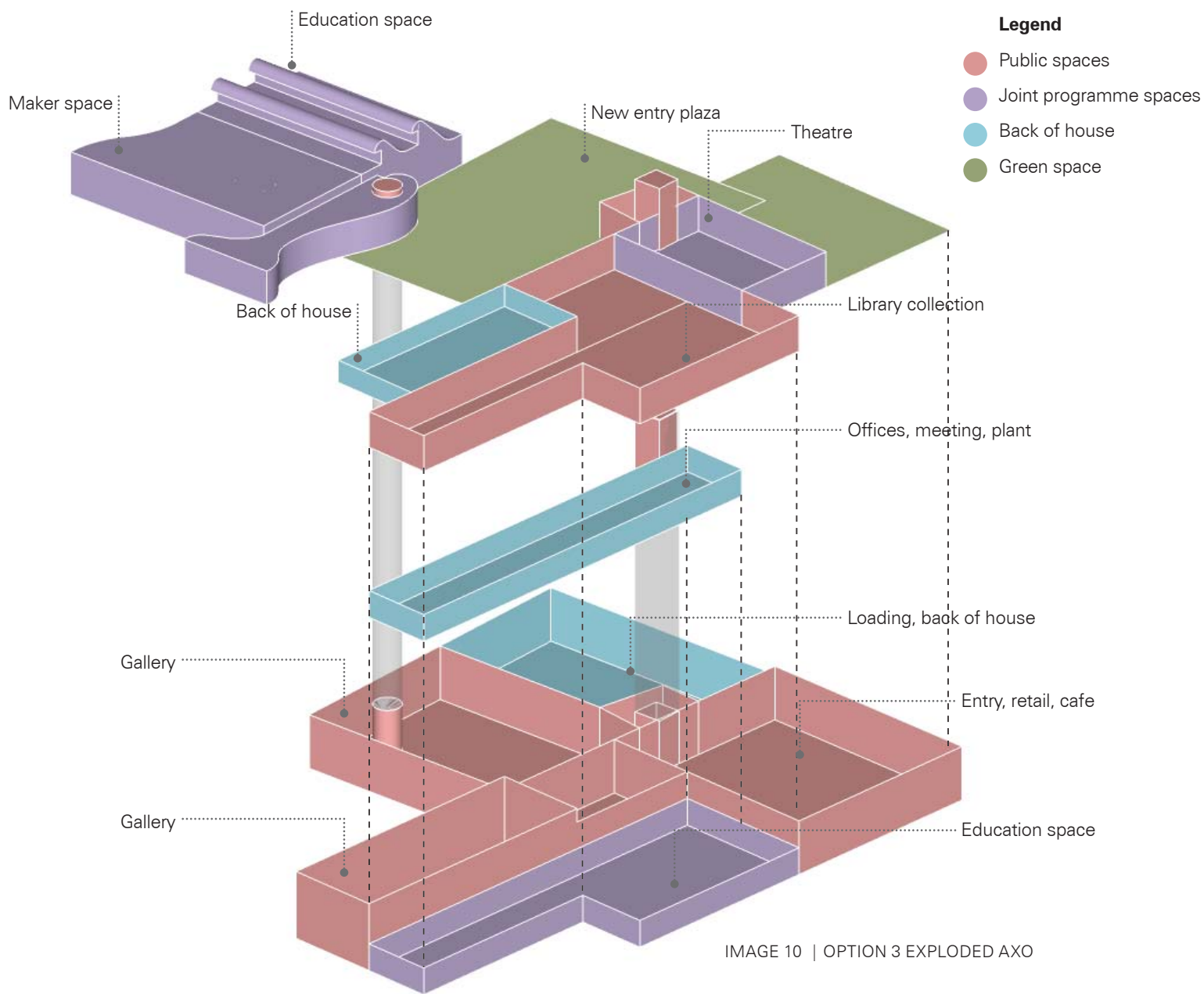


IMAGE 10 | OPTION 3 EXPLODED AXO

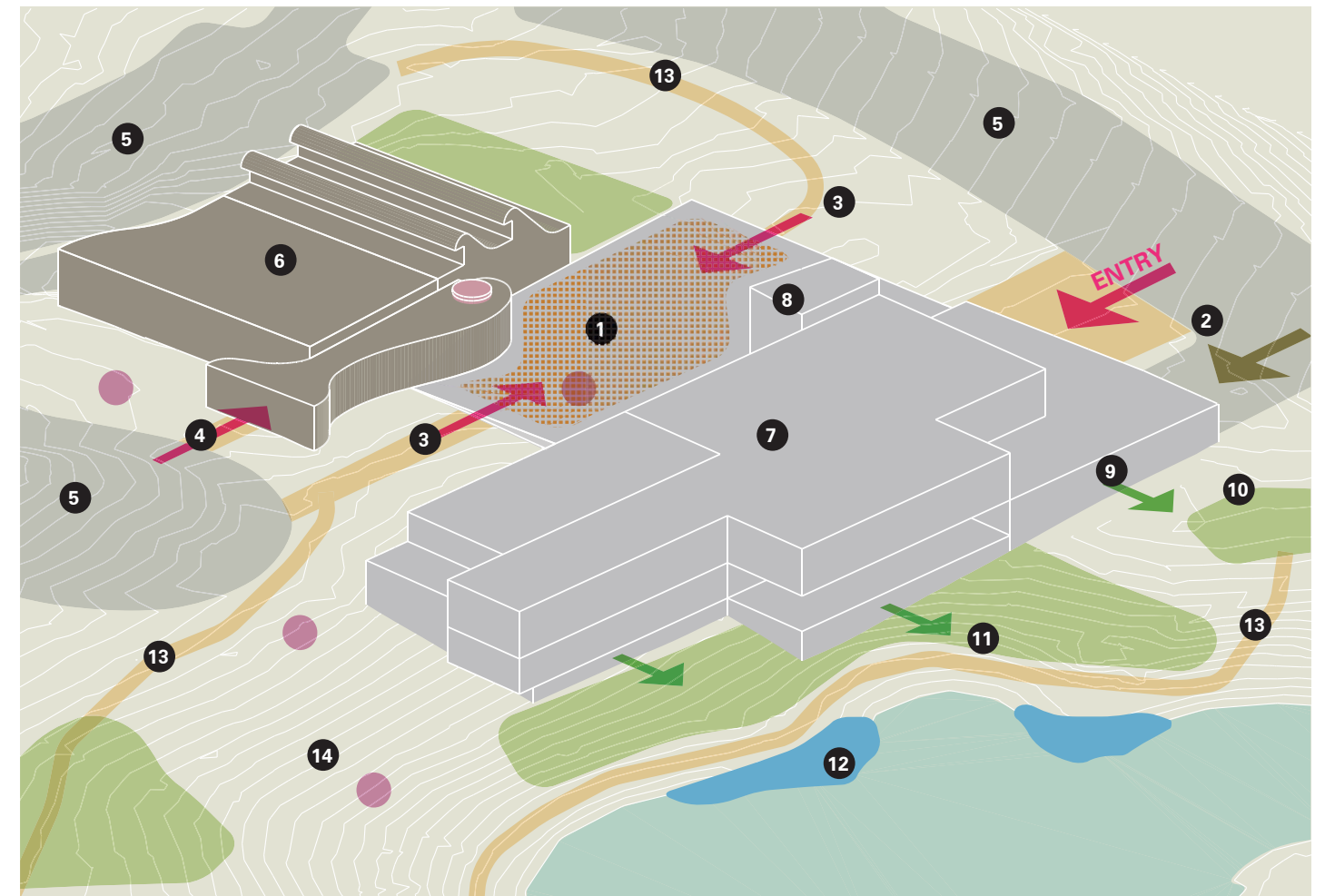


IMAGE 11 | OPTION 3 3D DIAGRAM

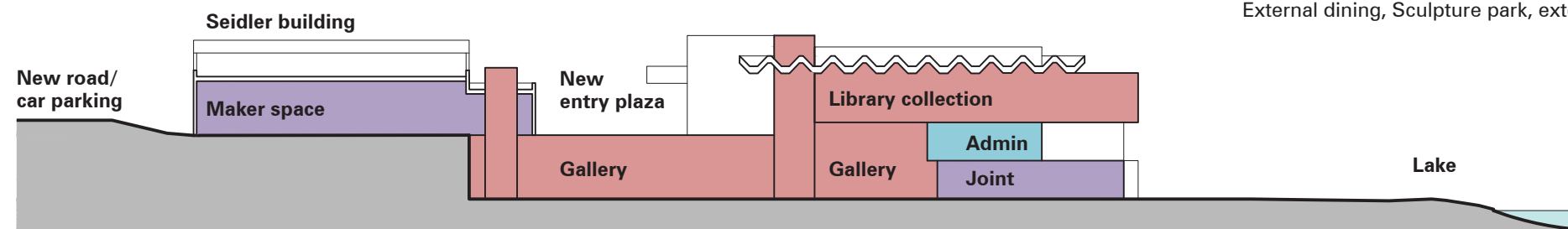


IMAGE 12 | OPTION 3 SECTION A: EAST-WEST SECTION

Option 3 areas	Proposed area (m ²)	Key moves
Public spaces		1 Plaza space
Gallery, Cafe, Retail, Library	2,200	2 Main entry space at lower level
Joint programme spaces		3 New pedestrian paths from car park / drop-off
Theatre, Study, Reading room, Children's gallery, Education spaces, Maker space	950	4 After hours/ School entry
Back of house		5 Reconfigured car parking and drop-off zone
Storage, prep, loading, plant, kitchen, staff facilities	1,900	6 Existing Seidler building
Exterior spaces		7 New building
External dining, Sculpture park, exterior events	TDB	8 Circulation core
		9 Interior program at lower level to have direct connection to exterior spaces
		10 Green open gathering space
		11 New exterior space connecting to the lake
		12 Reimagined lake edge including storm water treatment areas
		13 Reconfigured pedestrian paths
		14 Expanded sculpture garden

Site plan

Key moves

- 1 Expanded southern car park
- 2 New road connection between car parks
- 3 Northern rooftop car park
- 4 Loading access via Ferntree Gully road
- 5 Expanded link and new entry
- 6 Heritage pines courtyard
- 7 Existing Harry Seidler building
- 8 New building footprint
- 9 New southern gathering zone
- 10 Cafe Terrace
- 11 Exterior educational space/improved landscape
- 12 Bus dropoff loop
- 13 Jells Road entry
- 14 Lakeside gathering area
- 15 Children's Courtyard



IMAGE 3 | PROPOSED SITE PLAN



